

MOSQUE ATTACK KILLS 235 IN EGYPT

Islamic militants are suspected in an assault targeting Sufi Muslim worshipers in volatile North Sinai province.

By OMAR MEDHAT,
NABIH BULOS
AND ALEXANDRA ZAVIS

CAIRO — At least 235 people were killed when gunmen stormed a mosque during Friday prayers in the rugged Sinai Peninsula, setting off explosives and firing on worshipers in what was believed to be the deadliest single attack by Islamist extremists on Egyptian civilians.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the assault on the Rawda mosque in the town of Bir Abed, near the North Sinai provincial capital of Arish.

The region has long been the scene of a simmering Islamist insurgency, and fighters loyal to Islamic State have mounted large-scale attacks there against the country's security forces. But attacks against Muslim places of worship are rare in Egypt, and the scale of the bloodshed sent shock waves across the country.

The assault, which reportedly involved more than a dozen gunmen who arrived in off-road vehicles, targeted a mosque frequented by Sufi Muslims, followers of a mystical branch of Islam that Islamic State and other Sunni extremists deem to be heretical.

There were conflicting accounts of how the attack unfolded. Some witnesses said a bomb was detonated at the mosque's main gate, prompting a panicked flight for the exits. Others did not report hearing an explosion but said at least three attackers broke into the

[See Egypt, A4]



VICTIMS ARE carried off after the mosque attack in Bir Abed, near Arish, Egypt. More than a dozen gunmen reportedly opened fire and set off explosives. In addition to those killed, at least 109 were injured.

Black Friday crowds thin out as e-commerce wins more ground

But going out to shop still has its perks: the holiday ambience and instant gratification.

By SAMANTHA MASUNAGA,
ELLIS SIMANI, IRIS LEE
AND JACLYN COSGROVE

Chae Woong Bae and his girlfriend had steeled themselves to brave the Black Friday shopping chaos they'd watched on TV back home in South Korea.

But when the pair arrived at 4:30 a.m. Friday at a Target in North Hollywood for their first Black Friday outing, they were the only ones in line. No one else joined the queue for an hour, ahead of the store's opening at 6 a.m.

"On the TV, we see people fighting each other, so at first, we were a little scared to come today," said a disappointed Bae, 22. "I didn't expect it to be so quiet."



SHOPPERS line up at Toys R Us in Ontario. To compete with online sellers, bricks-and-mortar stores have offered discounts days before Black Friday.

Once known for frenzied crowds that jostled for deals in packed stores, Black Friday in Southern California has become a more subdued scene. The rise of e-commerce has made savings available to anyone, anywhere — at any time.

To compete with online sellers, and each other, bricks-and-mortar retailers have pushed discounts days and even weeks before the day once considered the crucial barometer of the holiday shopping season.

The result: Consumers said stores and malls were less packed and more relaxed. It was a welcome change for some.

"If I had walked in and there was a massive crowd, I would have walked right out," said Amanda Solomon, 25, as she shopped with her mother at the Macy's at Westfield Century City mall.

"It wouldn't be worth the savings," her mother, Irene Castaldo, 63, chimed in.

[See Black Friday, A12]

DNA evidence that freed man was nearly lost

A major hurdle faced police reopening a '78 murder case. It ended in a prisoner's pardon.

By LAURA J. NELSON AND
ALENE TCHEKMEDYIAN

Decades into a life prison sentence without the possibility of parole, Craig Coley continued to insist he was innocent.

The former restaurant night manager had fought unsuccessfully for years to overturn a conviction for a grisly double murder that had shocked Simi Valley in 1978.

But when police recently reopened the case, they faced a daunting obstacle. After Coley lost his final appeal years ago, a judge had issued an order permitting the destruction of the crime scene evidence.

A cold-case detective began what some expected to be a fruitless search. He tried to contact the two laboratories that had performed rudimentary tests on the crime scene evidence in the 1970s and found that both had gone out of business. A Northern California lab had acquired their contents.

That's when the detective discovered the evidence

boxes had not been destroyed but were sitting forgotten, intact and in storage.

New tests found that a key piece of evidence used to convict Coley did not carry any of his DNA, investigators said.

"We had thought it was destroyed," Michael Schwartz, Ventura County special assistant district attorney, said in an interview Thursday. "Whether we'd reached the same conclusion without that, I don't know."

Gov. Jerry Brown pardoned Coley on Wednesday, writing that the DNA evidence and a painstaking re-investigation of the case proved his innocence.

Coley was 31 when he was arrested and 70 when he was released Wednesday. A former Simi Valley police officer who was convinced of Coley's innocence plans to help him "get acclimated to freedom" in San Diego, the officer wrote on a GoFundMe page.

It was a relative who came across the bodies of Rhonda Wicht and her son on Nov. 11, 1978. Suspicions had been raised when Wicht, 24, had not arrived for a family get-together.

Police said she had been beaten, raped and strangled with a macrame rope. Her 4-year-old son, Donald, had

[See Pardon, A10]



RAMIRO CORDERO, center, a U.S. Border Patrol agent, helps wrangle calves for branding at his family's ranch in Mexico, where he hopes to retire.

A life astride the border

Ramiro Cordero grew up in Mexico and works for the U.S. Border Patrol. He's not the only one.

By LAUREN VILLAGRAN

MOCTEZUMA, Mexico — U.S. Border Patrol Agent Ramiro Cordero has spent nearly two decades working on the border in Texas, part of the El Paso sector team responsible for intercepting migrants and drug smugglers flowing in from Mexico.

On most Fridays, Cordero sheds his green uniform and gun belt, packs the bed of his tan F-150 pickup truck and sets off with his wife across the international bridge.

Weekends find him on his ranch in Moctezuma, deep in the state of Chi-

huahua, tending the pecan orchard, wrestling calves for branding or building a pit fire for freshly butchered pork *barbacoa*.

Cordero, 46, grew up in Mexico and hopes to retire there soon. He is one of a substantial group of border agents — more than half of whom are Latino — whose family connections are in Mexico, whose professional loyalty is to the United States, whose history straddles both sides of the border.

"It's not unusual to see," he says, naming at least four friends and family members from Ciudad Juarez, south of El Paso on the Mexican side of the border, who

[See Border, A6]

Would tax cut bring higher wages?

GOP promises a boon for workers. CEOs and economists see a different scenario.

By JIM PUZZANGHERA
AND DON LEE

WASHINGTON — Gary Cohn, the top White House economic advisor, was on-stage making the Trump administration's case that a huge cut in corporate taxes would trigger a surge of business investments.

Then came an off-the-cuff question to business leaders listening to Cohn at the Wall Street Journal CEO Council meeting last week: How many will increase investments if the Republican tax plan is enacted?

TV coverage showed about three dozen executives sitting near the stage. Only three of them appeared to raise their hands. An incredulous Cohn responded: "Why aren't the other hands up?"

A video clip of that moment, which has become popular viewing in Washington, illustrates what many economists regard as a flaw in the administration's main selling point for the Republican tax proposal: the argument that a dramatic cut in the U.S. corporate tax rate will be a boon to America's middle class.

The White House Council of Economic Advisers promises that the corporate tax cut, to 20% from 35%, would lead to an increase of at least \$4,000 a year in average household income.

But that calculation depends on an assumption that workers would get a much bigger cut of the corporate tax savings than most economic studies — including those by the Treasury Department and Congressional Budget Office — have shown.

Most economists agree that the Republican tax plan will boost business investments. And that should lead to more hiring, greater productivity and increased company profits that would, in theory, prompt employers to raise wages.

In today's economy, however, experts said it's unrealistic to expect the kind of investment bonanza that proponents of the tax plan are banking on.

One of the key drivers of investment is access to money, which hasn't been a problem for most businesses. Large companies, in particular, already have plenty of cash. Borrowing costs are historically very low.

AT&T Inc. this month promised to increase its U.S.

[See Taxes, A10]

How Antonio Villaraigosa made millions

After leaving office, the ex-mayor earned money by advising companies, teaching and making speeches, his tax returns show.

CALIFORNIA, B1

Leading L.A. after dark

Some club owners and promoters believe installing a "night mayor" could make nightlife in the city safer.

CALENDAR, E1

Weather
Mostly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 81/58. **B6**

